NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
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ERNEST WEATHERALL/NEW DELHI

PROBLEMS FOR JANATA

ANNCR:

INDIA'S JANATA PARTY, WHICH HAS BEEN RUNNING THE COUNTRY FOR THE PAST FIFTEEN MONTHS, FACES SERIOUS PROBLEMS. ERNEST WEATHERALL HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM NEW DELHI.

VOICE:

THERE WAS AN ERA OF GOOD FEELING IN INDIA WHEN THE NEWLY FORMED JANATA PARTY BEGAN TO RULE THE COUNTRY AFTER DEFEATING INDIRA GANDHI'S CONGRESS PARTY IN THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS. THE JANATA PARTY WAS HAILED AT HOME AND ABROAD FOR BRINGING BACK DEMOCRACY TO INDIA AFTER MISSUS GANDHI SUSPENDED CIVIL RIGHTS UNDER THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY.

BUT AS MONTHS WENT BY THE GOOD FEELING BEGAN TO DISSIPATE AS PRICES BEGAN TO RISE, STRIKES CRIPPLED INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT CONTINUED TO CLIMB, AND LAW AND ORDER STARTED TO BREAK DOWN. SINCE THE NEW GOVERNMENT TOOK OFFICE, MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED PERSONS HAVE BEEN KILLED BY POLICE DURING PROTESTS OF ONE KIND OR ANOTHER.

THERE WERE SUGGESTIONS THAT PRIME MINISTER MORARJI DESAI DID NOT HAVE CONTROL OF HIS OWN MINISTERS, AND MANY FELT THE PRIME MINISTER WAS TOO PREOCCUPIED WITH HIS UNPOPULAR LIQUOR PROHIBITION CAMPAIGN AND WAS NOT PAYING ENOUGH ATTENTION TO THE COUNTRY'S MORE SERIOUS PROBLEMS. MEANWHILE, THE JANATA PARTY BEGAN TO INDULGE IN PETTY SQUABBLINGS, WHICH HAS NOW GROWN INTO SERIOUS IN-FIGHTING.

THIS WAS NOT UNEXPECTED BY MOST POLITICAL OBSERVERS HERE. THE JANATA WAS FORMED FROM A COALITION OF FIVE OPPOSITION PARTIES

RANGING FROM RIGHT TO LEFT. THEY WERE WELDED TOGETHER BY THEIR DETERMINATION TO BEAT INDIRA GANDHI AT THE POLLS FIFTEEN MONTHS AGO. BUT AFTER ACCOMPLISHING THAT, CRITICISM SAY JANATA HAS DONE LITTLE ELSE.

DURING THE PAST FEW WEEKS, THE MINISTERS IN DESAI'S CABINET HAVE BEEN TELLING THE NEWS MEDIA ABOUT THEIR DIFFERENCES. IT IS NO SECRET THAT THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF BITTERNESS BETWEEN HOME MINISTER CHRAN SINGH AND DEFENSE MINISTER JAGJIVAN RAN, OR THAT HEALTH MINISTER RAJ NARAIN IS DEMANDING THAT CHANDRA SEKHAR RESIGN AS PRESIDENT OF THE PARTY, EVEN THOUGH PRIME MINISTER DESAI WANTS CHANDRA SEKHAR TO REMAIN IN THE OFFICE.

IN A FEW DAYS, THE JANATA PARTY'S PARLIAMENTARY BOARD WILL MEET TO TRY AND PATCH UP ALL THESE QUARRELS AND STAVE OFF WHAT COULD BE THE MOST SERIOUS INDIAN POLITICAL CRISIS SINCE THE PARTY CAME TO POWER. MEANWHILE, FORMER PRIME MINISTER INDIRA GANDHI IS PRESSING HER EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE A POLITICAL COMEBACK AND IS CAPITALIZING ON WHAT SHE CALLS THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE JANATA PARTY. MANY OBSERVERS THINK THAT UNLESS JANATA RESOLVES ITS INTERNAL DIFFERENCES AND BEGINS TO WORK ON INDIA'S PROBLEMS, MISSUS GANDHI AND HER CONGRESS PARTY COULD SOON LOOM AGAIN AS A REAL POLITICAL POWER.

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WJL/RTD